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ABSTRACT

This brief report summarizes data on racial and ethnic differences in participation in higher education. Major findings include: (1) between 1993 and 1995, white high school graduates aged 18-24 enrolled in college at a rate 9 percentage points higher than blacks and Hispanics; (2) between 1972 and 1995, the college enrollment rate for whites aged 18-24 grew 11 percent and for blacks 8 percent; (3) between 1993 and 1995, enrollment rates in two-year institutions were similar for white and black high school graduates and higher for Hispanics; however, both blacks and Hispanics were substantially less likely than whites to be enrolled in four-year institutions; and (4) enrollment rates for high school graduates aged 25 or older were much lower than for those aged 18-24; these rates were similar for whites, blacks, and Hispanics. A chart and two graphs show the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in college, by age and race/ethnicity for selected years from 1972 through 1995. (DB)

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INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

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Racial and ethnic differences in participation in higher education

September 1998

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

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Racial and ethnic differences in participation in higher education

Racial and ethnic differences in college enrollment rates may reflect differences in access to and persistence in higher education for groups with varying social and economic backgrounds. Differing enrollment rates are also a leading indicator of future differences in the earnings and productivity associated with postsecondary education. The college enrollment rate for 18- to 24-year-olds is influenced by the number who enroll immediately after graduating from high school, the number who delay entry, and the number of years individuals in both of these groups stay in higher education.

- **Between 1993 and 1995, white high school graduates aged 18–24 were more likely to be enrolled in college than were their black and Hispanic counterparts. For these years, the average enrollment rate for whites was 9 percentage points higher than that of both blacks and Hispanics.**
- **The percentage of high school graduates aged 18–24 enrolled in college was higher in 1995 than in 1972 for whites and blacks. During this period, the college enrollment rates for whites grew substantially (11 percentage points), with most of the growth occurring after 1981. College enrollment rates for blacks of the same age group grew moderately over the period (8 percentage points).**
- **Between 1993 and 1995, enrollment rates in 2-year institutions were similar for white and black high school graduates aged 18–24, while Hispanics were more likely than whites or blacks to be enrolled in 2-year institutions. However, both black and Hispanic high school graduates aged 18–24 were substantially less likely to be enrolled in 4-year institutions than were their white counterparts.**
- **Enrollment rates for older adults, high school graduates aged 25 or older, were much lower than those for their younger counterparts aged 18–24 regardless of racial and ethnic group. Between 1993 and 1995, college enrollment rates were similar for white, black, and Hispanic high school graduates aged 25–34.**

Percentage of high school graduates enrolled in college, by age and race/ethnicity: Selected Octobers 1972–95

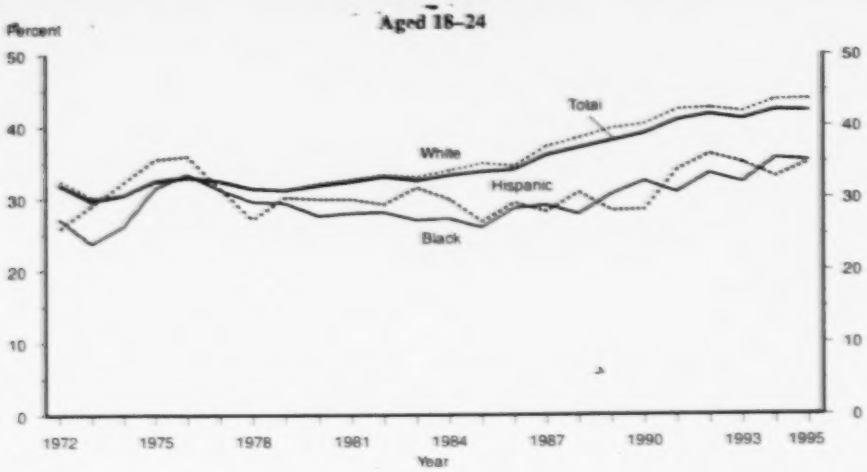
	Aged 18–24				Aged 25–34				Aged 35 or older			
October	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
1972	31.9	32.6	27.2	25.8	8.4	8.4	8.8	7.5	—	—	—	—
1974	30.5	30.6	26.2	32.3	9.3	9.1	10.8	10.0	—	—	—	—
1976	33.1	32.8	33.4	35.9	9.6	9.2	11.9	11.0	2.3	2.1	4.1	3.9
1978	31.4	31.3	29.6	27.1	9.1	8.8	10.8	10.2	2.4	2.2	3.8	4.2
1980	31.8	32.1	27.6	29.9	8.9	8.7	9.6	9.2	2.1	2.0	3.4	2.9
1982	33.0	33.3	28.1	29.2	8.9	8.7	9.6	9.7	2.2	2.1	2.7	2.9
1984	33.2	33.9	27.2	29.9	8.6	8.4	8.0	9.9	2.1	2.0	2.7	1.8
1986	34.0	34.5	28.6	29.4	8.3	7.9	7.9	10.4	2.4	2.2	3.3	3.4
1988	37.0	38.4	27.8	30.8	8.0	7.8	7.5	7.8	2.7	2.6	3.3	3.4
1990	39.0	40.3	32.4	28.4	8.6	8.7	5.9	7.0	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.9
1991	40.8	42.3	30.8	33.9	9.0	8.7	8.1	8.6	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.9
1992	41.6	42.5	33.4	36.1	8.6	8.5	6.7	8.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7
1993	41.0	42.0	32.2	34.9	8.5	8.2	8.1	9.5	2.6	2.4	3.3	3.1
1994	42.2	43.6	35.5	32.9	9.5	9.1	9.7	10.1	2.7	2.5	3.5	4.3
1995	42.1	43.7	35.2	34.9	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.0	2.6	2.4	3.5	3.8

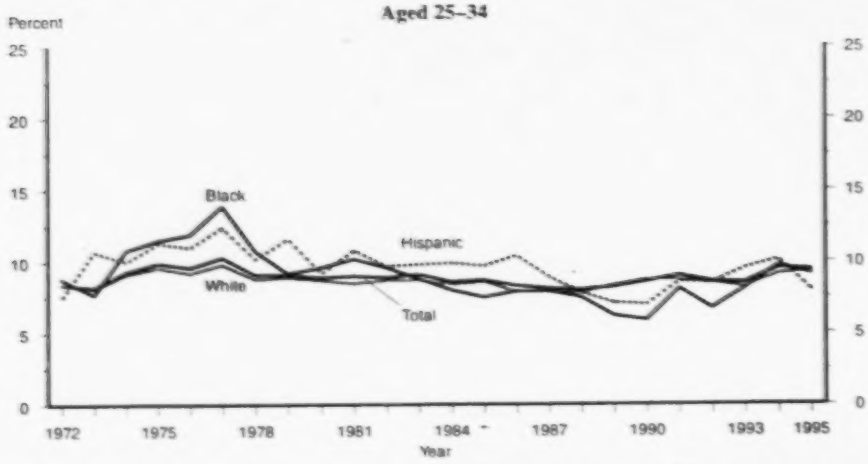
— Not available.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are high school graduates from other racial/ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

Percentage of high school graduates enrolled in college, by age and race/ethnicity: October 1972–95





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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

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